

# 2 John: A Commentary

## Scripture in a Structural Format

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Dr. Morris Murray, Jr.

## II John

### Introduction

The importance of any communication is based not only on the importance of the one who initiates the communication but also the one/ones who receive such communication. The Bible is a written communication of truths from God about Himself and also about the ones who receive that communication. Such truths, therefore, must be captured and conveyed accurately and/or adequately.

The study of the Bible, or any portion of it, should have the following words prefaced to said study:

It is not simply requisite that the Bible should speak, but equally so that we should not mistake its meaning. We must be able to synthesize a complete and perfect harmony of its teaching. Each part can only be known by the light of the whole. Many a truth or fact has a very different character when it is considered as part of a well-constructed whole (Foster, pp. 287-288).

The purpose of this commentary on 2 John is to accomplish the objectives set forth above and to do so in a strategically organized format to facilitate accurate and adequate comprehension of this part or portion of scripture. Only the reader will be able to determine how successful and/or meaningful this commentary is along these lines.

Consisting of 13 verses and 245 words in Greek (excluding textual variants), the epistle or letter before us is one of the shortest writings in the New Testament. It is, indeed, possible that this writing is a condensed version of 1 John or, perhaps, more likely, that it was written before 1 John and serves as the foundation or basis from which 1 John takes its expansive mission. In other words, the major concepts which 1 John explores in more details may actually be derived from II John. Regardless of the conclusion one may reach in this regard, the writing before us is very personal, pointed, and poignant.

II John is also unique, although not alone in the New Testament, in that there is no designated destination, no geographical references or locations, no quotations from the Old Testament, and many remarkable parallels (words, phrases) with I John, as noted by Brooke in *The International Critical Commentary* (p. lxxiv). Furthermore, this writing, although brief, consists of appreciable notices about the significance of love (vs. 1, 3, 5, 6), truth (vs. 1 [twice], 2, 3, 4), consistent obedience (vs. 4, 6, 9), false teachers/teachings (vs. 7, 9, 10), conservative interactions (vs. 10-11), and joy (vs. 12) in ways which reveal central ingredients in the Christian faith – needed *then* and *now*!

The Greek text is transliterated into English. The translations are my own, unless noted otherwise. The outline or structure for this commentary is from my previous composition: *Outlined Reading Guides to the New Testament*.

## Outline

- I      FORMAL SALUTATION (v. 1-3)
  - A.      Position (v. 1a)
  - B.      Personification (v. 1b)
  - C.      Particular Love (v. 1c)
  - D.      Personal Influence (v. 2)
  - E.      Poignant Affirmation (v. 3)
  
- II     FAMILIAR SOUNDS (v. 4-6)
  - A.      Pastoral Urgency (v. 4)
  - B.      Practice Obedience (v. 5-6)
  
- III    FITTING SUBJECTS (v. 7-11)
  - A.      Perverted Confession (v. 7)
  - B.      Passionate Concern (v. 8)
  - C.      Persevering Conduct (v. 9)
  - D.      Peculiar Crisis (v. 10-11)
  
- IV    FINAL SENTIMENTS (v. 12-13)
  - A.      Proposed Coming (v. 12)
  - B.      Pleasantry Communicated (v. 13)

## II John

### I FORMAL SALUTATION (v. 1-3)

#### A. Position (v. 1a)

The author designates himself as *Ho presbuteros* (“The elder”), a position of respectful leadership, honor, and authority to address the church in relation to matters of appropriate conduct, confrontation, and counsel. Outside of Paul’s 3 uses of this word in the singular noted below, only John uses this word in the singular here and 3 Jn.1.

This expression is found 25 times in the plural in the gospel accounts with regard to the older, learned, and highly respected Jewish rabbis: Mt. 15:2; 16:21; 21:23; 26:3, 47, 57, 59; 27:1, 3, 12, 20, 41; 28:12; Mk. 7:3, 5; 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1; Lk. 7:3; 9:22; 15:25; 20:1; 22:52; Jn. 8:9.

It occurs 18 times in the plural in Acts: 2:17; 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15.

Paul uses the expression 5 times: 1 Tim. 5:1, 2 (singular), 17 (plural), 19 (singular); Tit. 1:5 (plural).

The author of Hebrews uses it 1 time in the plural: 11:2; James uses it 1 time in the plural: 5:14; and Peter uses it 2 times in the plural: 5:1, 5.

The word is found 12 times in the plural in the Revelation: 4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4.

#### B. Personification (v. 1b)

The recipients of this writing are personified, regarded, or represented in a symbolic manner: *eklekte kuria kai tois teknois autas* (“to elect lady and to her children”). On the one hand, the reason for using this symbolic or figurative expression was to conceal from forces which were antagonistic to the Christian faith the identity of the recipients. On the other hand, it may simply be the author’s way of lending a special flavor to a term with which the early Christians were already somewhat familiar. Perhaps, both ideas may be true.

After all, the term *eklektos* (in its masculine form) is found in other New Testament writings (Mt. 20:16; 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; Mk. 13:20, 22, 27; Lk. 18:7; 23:35; Ro. 8:33; 16:13; Co. 3:12; 1 Ti. 5:21; 2 Ti. 2:10; Tit. 1:1; 1 Pt. 1:2; 2:4, 6, 9; Rev. 17:14) to refer to those with whom God has initiated salvation, called to be His own, and who subsequently chose Him to be their own God and Savior (cp. Boyce, pp. 341-356; Young, pp. 338-340; Conner, pp. 153, 155, 162, 165, 245; Stagg, pp. 84-88; Culpepper, pp. 19-23, 40, 101, 124; Grudem, pp. 281-292). However, here and v. 13 are the only places in the New Testament where the feminine form (*eklekte, eklektes*) occurs.

The word *kuria* (a feminine form of *kurios*) is found only 2 times in the NT: here and v. 5, both in the singular. Again, when combined, these two words are cryptic

or symbolic ways of referring to the Christian Church. This conclusion will be additionally brought together with commentary on vs. 4, 6, and 13. However, some suggest that *kuria* is a proper name and refers to some Christian woman by that name (Bengel, pp. 816-817; Vincent, p. 391; Robertson, p. 249). *kai tois teknois autēs* (“and to her children”) further clarifies the recipients of this writing. The word *sutes* (“her”) is a feminine personal pronoun and mirrors the feminine word *kuria* (lady”) above. The offspring are designated *tois teknois* (“the children”), an affectionate, masculine plural expression for fellow-Christians, which he uses again in vs. 4 and 13 (cp. 1 Jn. 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2; 3 Jn. 4).

#### C. Particular Love (v. 1c)

*hous ego agapo en aletheia* (“whom I love in truth”) anchors all that will be said in a particular kind of love - without which, all that is said may be useless. *hous* is a plural masculine relative pronoun and refers back to “children,” thus specifying the objects of such love.

In order to emphasize or stress the intensity of his love for them, John inserts the personal pronoun, *ego*. Notice also that the word he uses for love is not merely friendly or brotherly kind of love, as important as that kind of love may be. Rather, John refers to the godly, sacrificial kind of love (*agapo*) which infiltrates and radiates from his entire being in their behalf. It is the kind of love which *gives* to meet the needs of others whether or not it is received as such. Thus, this love operates *en aletheia* (“in truth”), that is, in the sphere of truth wherein genuineness or authenticity, wholeheartedness, and an absence of hypocrisy circulates. In other words, this kind of love reflects or mirrors the concern which God Himself has demonstrated again and again to people. This same word is used by John in vs. 2, 3, 4. Also cp 1 Jn. 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21 (twice); 3:18, 19; 4:6; 5:6; 3 Jn. 1, 3 (twice), 4, 8, 12.

The author then quickly exclaims that this kind of love is experienced and expressed by not only himself *alla kai pantes hoi egnokotes ten aletheian* (“but also all who know the truth”). In other words, the entire Christian community shares equally in the truthful convictions that God has revealed Himself personally in Jesus, that the Christian message is devoid of lies and deceptions, and that those who teach or live in ways inconsistent with the Christian message are to be avoided.

In order to reinforce the significance of these truthful convictions, John uses a perfect tense verb (*egnokotes*). In other words, the perfect tense stresses completed action or action in a finished state or experiential results. Even though a process may have led to this point, it is the end product, rather than the process itself, which this verb tense declares or emphasizes.

Therefore, the Christian message is not content with simple intellectual affirmations of theories about God. Rather, the Christian message is bathed in the knowledge of truth which revolutionizes one’s life around circles of undying,

active, selfless, continual concern for others. “Truth” refers to a life of sincerity, genuineness, and reality which those who walk in darkness do not know or even understand.

D. Personal Influence (v. 2)

*dia ten aletheian ten menousan en hemin kai meth’ hemon estai eis ton aiona:*

“because of the truth which remains in us and shall be with us forever” –

This “love in truth” syndrome is so powerful and transforming because it “remains in us” (Present tense participle) as an abiding influence upon our personal lives. Up against the backdrop of the forces of evil which were seeking to dissuade the readers from continuing in the pathways of Christian instructions which they had received, John seeks to bolster them with this superlative fact. Nevertheless, he also wants to strengthen his declaration with a more deliberate and forceful reminder: the Christian truth “shall be with us forever” (Future tense). Thus, saturation with both these perspectives (“in us” for the present and “with us” in the future) is designed to precipitate a refreshing, rejuvenative influence upon their personal lives.

E. Poignant Affirmation (v. 3)

Rather than a greeting, v. 3 is an exclamation or poignant affirmation about the cluster of three critical Christian characteristics: *charis eleos eirene* (“grace” “mercy” “peace”) – found in the NT only here and 1 & 2 Timothy (see the Appendix for excerpts from Alexander Maclaren’s exposition of these 3 words). The word “cluster,” of course, indicates “a number of things of the same kind growing or grouped together.” The fact that John is stating the matter as such is indicated by his use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular with the future tense verb *estai*. In other words, instead of “they” (3<sup>rd</sup> personal plural), “*it* shall be” *meth’ hemon* (“with us”). These three characteristics co-exist and cannot be disconnected from each other: *charis* refers to the undeserved, unmerited, favor or kindness of God in which guilt is taken away; receiving from God what we do not deserve; *eleos* refers to the pity, compassion or mercifulness of God in that we do not receive from God what we do deserve; *eirene* refers to the absence of inward hostility to God; a restful and meaningful relationship with God which brings together all facets of life into a cohesive, integrated, and fulfilling fashion.

John then notes the source of this marvelously integrated cluster: *para theou patros kai para Iesou Christou tou huiou tou patros* (“from God [the] Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father”). Rather than simply saying *God*, which could convey something of an impersonal being who is not approachable, he stresses His personally accessible nature by the word “Father.”

To further reinforce this idea, he repeats the preposition *para* and extends the source to include “Jesus Christ the Son of the Father.” In other words, Jesus Christ was not the mere human son of Joseph, as heretical teachings then and now

maintain. He is One with God the Father and what comes from the Father also comes from the Son. This is the only occurrence of this expression in the NT. This threefold orientation to critical Christian characteristics is also found in 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; and Jude 2.

Effective teaching sometimes includes the element of *repetition*. So, in order to accentuate his previous position about *truth* and *love* in vs. 1 and 2, he here again places the threefold ingredients of God's characteristic manifestations of Himself to His followers *en aletheia kai agape* ("in truth and love"). In other words, "grace, mercy, and peace" not only find their source in God the Father and His Son, but also operate in the sphere of "truth and love." Those who try to separate, dissolve, deny or destroy the interconnectedness of these variables only show just how far removed from God they actually are. Instead of having *something special* to say about God, John will add later in this writing that they, in fact, have *absolutely nothing* to say about God. In fact, those who deny that God has ultimately unveiled, revealed, and He Himself took on flesh and blood in the person of His very Son, Jesus, are none other than "the deceiver and the antichrist" (v. 7).

## II FAMILIAR SOUNDS (v. 4-6)

### A. Pastoral Urgency (v. 4)

In spite of the bad news, sadness, alarm, and disappointment which he will address shortly, John initially expresses his joyfulness over the good news about them which he somehow discovered. When he states '*Echaren lian* ("I was exceedingly glad," he refers to the moment when he first received or heard the good news about them. The adverb *lian* ("exceedingly, greatly, very much, utterly, completely") is used to arouse or stir up in the minds of his readers just how thrilled he actually was. John uses this word only here and 3 Jn 3. However, it is found elsewhere in the NT in Mt. 2:16; 4:8; 8:28; 27:14; Mk. 1:35; 6:51; 9:3; 16:2; Lk. 23:8; 2 Co. 11:5; 12:11; and 2 Ti. 4:15.

*Hoti heureka ek ton teknon sou peripatountas en aletheia* ("because I found [some] of your children walking in truth") – The use of the perfect tense verb *heureka* indicates that what he found in the past is still presently before him. So, some translate it "find" (*The Twentieth Century New Testament*, *New English Bible*, *New American Standard Bible*, *New International Version*, *Williams*, *Beck*, *Phillips: The NT in Modern English*, *Holy Bible: New Evangelical Translation*; *The New Testament in Modern English* by Helen Barrett Montgomery). The *Contemporary English Version* translates it "learn." The word "children" (*teknon*) is in the plural, as it is in vs. 1 and 13. This is, perhaps, more of an affectionate term which John, the elder/aged, now prefers over son or daughter. The plural here matches the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural verbs, *echo* ("we have") and *agapao* ("we love") in v. 5; *peripateo* ("we walk"), *akouo* ("ye heard" – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), and *peripateo* ("ye walk" – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural) in

v. 6; *blepo* (“ye watch” – 2<sup>nd</sup> personal plural), *apollumi* (“ye may not lose” – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), *ergazomai* (“we accomplished”), and *apolambano* (“ye may receive” – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural) in v. 8; *lambano* (“ye do not receive” – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), *lego* (“ye do not say” – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural) in v. 10. Also note the plural *humin* (“to ye”) in v. 12.

The word translated “walking” (*peripateo*) is a present tense active participle indicating that such “walking” (i.e., “living, conducting oneself, moving about”) is still taking place. John uses this word twice in v. 6. This same word is also used by John in 1 Jn. 1:6, 7; 2:6 (twice), 11; as well as 3 Jn. 3, 4.

Actually, the same word is used quite extensively in the NT in this regard. For example, it is found in the various gospel narrative 39 times: Mt. 4:18; 9:5; 11:5; 14:25, 26, 29; 15:31; Mk. 1:16; 2:9; 5:42; 6:48, 49; 7:5; 8:24; 11:27; 12:38; 16:12; Lk. 5:23; 7:22; 11:44; 20:46; 24:17; Jn. 1:36; 5:8, 9, 11, 12; 6:19, 66; 7:1 (twice); 8:12; 10:23; 11:9, 10, 54; 12:35 (twice); 21:18. It occurs 8 times in Acts: 3:6, 8 (twice), 9, 12; 14:8, 10; 21:21. Paul uses it 32 times: Ro. 6:4; 8:1, 4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Co. 3:3; 7:17; 2 Co. 4:2; 5:7; 10:2, 3; 12:18; Ga. 5:16; Ep. 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Ph. 3:17, 18; Co. 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; 1 Th. 2:12; 4:1, 12; 2 Th. 3:6, 11. It is found one time in Heb. 13:9 and 1 Pt. 5:8. It occurs 5 times in Rv. 2:1; 3:4; 9:20; 16:15; 21:24.

For the fifth and final time in this brief writing, John classifies their consistent conduct to be “in truth” (*en aletheia*). Again, the word “truth” denotes a life of sincerity, genuineness, and reality which those who live their lives in darkness do not know or even understand. “Walking in truth” encompasses all the light that is available in the revelation of God’s Word and the corresponding commandments contained therein.

John wants no uncertainty in the comprehension of his directives and, therefore, declares this in clear language: *kathos entolen elabomen para tou patros* (“even as/just as we received commandment/instruction from the Father.” The words “in truth” and “commandment” are synonymous, interchangeable expressions. The word *entole* (“commandment, instruction”) is used by John 4 times: here, v. 5, and twice in v. 6. There is no controversy as to its meaning or content: *love* (Schrenk, pp. 554-556; Marshall, p. 66; Brooke, p. 172; Lenski, p. 562; McDowell, p. 227), as the following two verses specify.

John, again, uses the word “Father” for the third time and will do so again in v. 9. He desires to leave no doubt as to the qualitative relationship between God and Jesus, as well as that of His followers.

## B. Practice Obedience (v. 5-6)

Here, the author leaves no doubt either about the intended outcome, purpose, or orientation of *truth*, *love*, and *commandment*: continual, practical obedience: *kai nun eroto se, kuria {ouch ohs entolen kainen graphon soi alla hen eichomen ap’ arches} hina agapomen allelous* (“and now I am asking or requesting you, lady, {not as though I am writing a new commandment to



you but which we had from *the* beginning} that we love one another”): The word *eroto* is filled with the flavor of asking, rather commanding, since he regards himself and his readers on the same plane of equality before God. Nevertheless, being “the elder,” they are “on such a footing of familiarity as lends authority to the request” he now makes (Trench, p. 145).

After the parenthetical expressions, which clarify that John is not writing a new teaching, command, or order to them, but rather one which dates back to the past or from the beginning of their Christian life and from Jesus Himself (Jn. 13:34; 15:12, 17; 1 Jn. 3:11), and with which his readers were unquestionably aware or knowledgeable, John states the purpose succinctly: *hina agapomen allelous* (“that we love one another”). This verb form of *agape*, *agapao*, has already been used in v. 1 where he assures them of his selfless, sacrificial concern for them. He has also used the noun or substantive, *agape*, in v. 3, and will do so again in v. 6. So, again, the ground of which he speaks is nothing new. Nevertheless, a *reminding-request* is always par for the course along the pathways of the Christian pilgrimage.

So, the same selfless, sacrificial concern which John has for his readers is the same selfless, sacrificial concern which is to be conducted for, to, and among *all Christians* (“we” - Present Subjective Active, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural), regardless of face, place, or space.

Lest his readers had been so influenced by false teachings that they were in any degree of doubt or confusion as to the exact meaning of the word *love*, in v. 6, he plainly defines it: *kai haute estin he agape, hina peripatomen karat as entolgas autou* (and this is the love, that we walk/live in accordance with His commandments.”

This is the second time John uses the word *peripateo* in reference to one’s “manner of living, lifestyle, ways in which one’s life is conducted.” His commandments are to live so that both lips and lives, both words and ways are without contradiction, and consistently reflect a need-meeting orientation (cp. 1 Jn. 3:10-18). All of His commandments, of course, fall under the domain of love, and without love, one does not know God (cp. 1 Jn.3:23-24; 4:7-21). However, in addition to defining precisely what “love” is, he also precisely defines what *the* commandment is: *haute he entole estin, kathos ekousate ap’ arches, hina en haute peripatete* (“this is the commandment, even as/just as ye heard from [the] beginning, that ye should walk in it”).

This is the fourth and final time John uses the word *entole* (“commandment”). However, he first prefaces his elaboration of just what it is by, again, asserting that it is nothing new, that no new teaching is needed. He will not now add anything new to update or replace what they initially heard about Christ and the Christian lifestyle – and neither should anyone else! When he repeats, with slight modification [“we may walk” – 1<sup>st</sup> person plural in v. 6a) to *hina en aute peripatete* (“that ye may walk” – 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), he stresses for them in particular, what love, by its very nature, expresses in particular – fulfilling the ultimately supreme commandment, according to Jesus: “The most important

commandment is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these” (Mk. 12:29-31; Mt. 22:37-40). In other words, there is not anything, no matter how religiously -appearing it may be, or how weighted it may be in the eyes of mankind, more important, and for which habitual obedience must be practiced or consistently carried out, than this.

### III FITTING SUBJECTS (v. 7-11)

#### A. Perverted Confession (v. 7)

*hoti polloi planoi exelthon eis ton kismon, hoi me homologountes 'Iesoun Christon erchomenon en sarki* (“because many deceivers went forth into the world, those not confessing Jesus Christ coming in flesh”)

*hoti* introduces the primary reason behind John’s writing: there are “many deceivers” attacking the heart and core of the Christian faith. The word *planoi* (“deceivers”) indicates “those who lead people astray; imposters; those who seduce others in an attempt to win them over; tricksters, bamboozlers; fakers; leg-pullers; liars.” In other words, instead of advocating “truth and love,” they advanced “lies and falsehoods.” Outside of the twofold use of this word in this verse, this word is found in the NT only in Mt. 27:63, 2 Co. 6:8, and 1 Ti. 4:1. The verb form of this word, *planao*, is found 39 times in the NT: Mt. 18:12 (twice), 13; 22:29; 24:4, 5, 11, 24; Mk. 12:24, 27; 13:5, 6; Lk. 21:8; Jn. 7:12, 47; 1 Co. 6:9; 15:33; Ga. 6:7; 2 Ti. 3:13 (twice); Tit. 3:3; Hb. 3:10; 5:2; 11:38; Jm. 1:16; 5:19; 1 Pt. 2:25; 2 Pt. 2:15; 1 Jn. 1:8; 2:26; 3:7; Re. 2:20; 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10. Another form of this word, *plane*, occurs 10 times in the NT: Mt. 27:64; Ro. 1:27; Ep. 4:14; 1 Th. 2:3; 2 Th. 2:11; Ja. 5:20; 2 Pt. 2:18; 3:17; 1 Jn. 4:6; Ju. 11.

To note that there were “many” of these “deceivers” signals an alarm which cannot be placed on the backburner of awareness and alertness. They not only left the company of the committed ones but also did so with the intention to lull or pull others into the company of the compromised, corrupt ones.

Their perverted confession consists of “not confessing Jesus Christ coming in the flesh” – The word confess means “to admit, declare, say plainly” that God became flesh and blood in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, as the one and only means by which God and mankind could be reconciled into a harmonious, meaningful relationship.

Furthermore, he uses a present tense participle (“coming”) to underscore the fact that He presently, in heaven, still retains His human and divine nature. This was a position which the corrupt ones denied with vehemence. By “not” confessing this central truth about the present and permanent reality of the nature of Jesus, their corrupt lies/falsehoods and perversions about this truth under-

cut the essential component of the Christian faith and teaching. John addresses this in more detail in John 1:14; I Jn. 1:7; 2:2, 23; 4:1, 2, 9, 10; 5:20.

As if plain is not plain enough, John proceeds to exclaim boldly: *houtos estin ho planos kai ho antichristos* (“this is the deceiver and the antichrist”) – With this second use of the word, *planos*, no lack of clarity could be entertained.

The word *Christos* (transliterated “Christ”) refers to the Anointed One or Messiah promised in the Old Testament who would provide sacrificial forgiveness for the sins of mankind. As such, the essence of Christ would involve His divine sonship with God. As such, the Christ would be the personification of God and subject to God alone as God’s Holy Suffering Servant. As such, the Christ would act in ways which consistently revealed both His humanity and His divinity. As such, the salvation or deliverance from sin to which He both spoke and acted, could not be accomplished in any other way or in any other person (Grundmann, pp. 527-572; Trench, pp. 105-111; Brooke, p. 175; Bengel, p. 818). Such declarations about Jesus would be ratified or verified by His resurrection (Ro. 1:4).

Therefore, John now adds another word, *antichristos*, which he alone of all the NT writers uses, to characterize the mindset behind their perverted confession: cp. I Jn. 2:18 (twice – 2<sup>nd</sup> time in the plural), 22; 4:3; and here.

The word basically means to be “against” or “opposed to” (*anti*) – “Christ” (*christos*) in this case. The term denotes an arch-enemy, a foe or one who is resistant to Christ (Trench, pp. 105-108) – as He is presented and processed in scripture. In short, anyone who denies the Father coming to earth in the flesh in the person of His Son, Jesus, and remaining in that unique relationship of Father and Son, is *anti-Christ*.

It is not the purpose of this commentary to entertain consideration of the various eschatological perspectives associated with the word “antichrist.” For an overview of those positions, see my *Biblical Perspectives: Eschatology – the Second Coming – the Millennium*.

## B. Passionate Concern (v. 8)

The word *blepo* is a fitting term to signal sobriety or soberness to his readers about the passionate concern John has for them. It is a word of warning; the need to be aware of a dire possibility; to beware; to watch out.”

Since this verb is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural (“ye”), and if *heautous* is taken as a reciprocal pronoun, instead of a reflexive pronoun (“yourselves”), then John would be telling them to watch out “for each other or one another.”

After all, the consistent testimony of NT scripture is that the church is the body of Christ. And just as the human body has many different parts, and each part has a specific function for the benefit of the body as a whole, so, the church has many different parts or members and each member should likewise function for the benefit of the body as a whole. “This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other” (1 Cor. 12:25; cp. vs. 12-27 – *New Living Translation*).

The purpose or aim of his warning is *hina me apolesete ha eirgasametha* (“that ye may not lose what we achieved, accomplished or performed”). *The Twentieth Century New Testament* translates it, “that you do not lose the fruit of all our work.” After all, it is only normal and desirable that results should be consistent with the direction of one’s goal (Moulton, p. 252).

Plummer (p. 181) puts it this way: “Take heed that these deceivers do not undo the work which Apostles and Evangelists have wrought in you, but that ye receive the full fruit of it.”

The words of Gary Burge also fit this same syndrome: “As evangelist and pastor, John has been a participant in the birth and maturation of the faith of the recipients of this letter. In other words, they are not the sole custodians of their church, free to do as they wish. John has been a builder among them, and his contributions and responsibility make him a justified critic of what is happening” (pp. 234-235).

Therefore, John is saying that he and each member of the congregation should watch out for each other’s good or welfare so that what *they together* have accomplished will not be lost or become fruitless. Rather (*alla*), by their mutual love, constant vigilance, and watch care for each other, *misthon plere apolabete* (“ye may receive a full or complete reward”).

The verb *apolabete* (“ye may receive”) is found only 12 times in the NT: Mk. 7:33; Lk. 6:34 (twice), 15:27; 16:25; 18:30; 23:41; Ro. 1:27; Ga. 4:5; Co. 3:24; here, and 3 Jn. 8). It denotes to receive so that no labor is lost (Robertson, p. 253).

The word *plere* (“full, complete, full-grown”) occurs 17 times in the NT: Mt. 14:20; 15:37; Mk. 4:28; 6:43; 8:19; Lk. 4:1; 5:12; Jn. 1:14; Ac. 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 9:36; 11:24; 13:10; 19:28; and here. It denotes being satisfied, wholly filled, perfect in the sense of completeness, in full, rich fullness, full measure (Delling, pp. 283-286).

The word *misthon* (“reward, pay, wages, recompense, gain”) occurs 29 times in the NT: Mt. 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 5, 16; 10:41 (twice), 42; 20:8; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; 10:7; Jn. 4:36; Ac 1:18; Ro. 4:4; 1 Co. 3:8, 14; 9:17, 18; 1 Ti. 5:18; Ja. 5:4; 2 Pt. 2:13, 15; here; Ju 11; Rev. 11:18; 22:12. Since eternal reward or appropriate compensation is on the line, nothing less should be desired or be denied. Thus, by their mutual and reciprocal watch care for one another, they will be fortified to resist the false teachings and the reward will be “full to overflowing” (Lenski, p. 567). John’s passionate concern is both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

### C. Persevering Conduct (v. 9)

John has already alluded to the major problem (perverted confession or rejection of the incarnation) and now directs attention as to why the loss of reward (his passionate concern) occurs: *pas ho proagon kai me menon en te didache tou christou theon ouk echei* (“Everyone who goes ahead of and does not remain

in the teaching of Christ does not have God”) – This may refer to the teachings which Christ Himself taught (subjective genitive) [Jn. 1:18], or the teachings about Him (objective genitive) by the apostles and others. Both ideas may very well be represented here. After all, *didache* means “teaching, instruction, what is taught.”

The verb *proagon* (“goes ahead or before”) is a present tense active participle denoting ongoing or continuous activity – in a bad sense. It is found 18 other times in the NT: Mt. 2:9; 14:22; 21:9, 31; 26:32; 28:7; Mk. 6:45; 10:32; 11:9; 14:28; 16:7; Lk. 18:39; Ac 12:6; 16:30; 25:26; 1 Ti. 1:18; 5:24; Heb. 7:18. Here it denotes going ahead of or beyond what is taught (*te didache*) about Christ. Instead of remaining in the true teaching about God becoming flesh and blood in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, those with a self-stimulated sense of superiority or elitist mentality relegated any other previous position to inferiority. In other words, their false teachings went beyond and/or vacated the message originally given to the readers and ranked it as worthless and not enough. Everyone who deposits such anti-incarnation teaching demonstrates that they do not have God in their hearts, minds, or on their side.

To the contrary, *ho menon en te didache, houtos kai ton patera kai ton huion echei* (“the one remaining in the teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son”) – Only continual adherence to the said teaching about Christ is the sine qua non (“something essential”) criteria by which it is revealed that one does, indeed, have both the Father and the Son in their hearts, mind, and on their side. Only corrupt heresy would seek to separate the two. The only way the Father may be known or made known is through commitment to His Son. To know One is to know the Other – to isolate One from the Other is to know neither. Thus, in the case of these false teachers/teachings, *to advance* is actually *to regress*.

#### D. Peculiar Crisis (v. 10-11)

Now, John presents a first class conditional clause (which assumes reality; that is, that they did actually come):

*Ei tis erchetai pros humas kai tauten ten didachen ou pherei* (“If anyone comes to all of you [plural] and does not bring along this teaching”) –

John is speaking to the whole congregation (*humas* – “ye”), as he continues to alert them to a peculiar crisis. No matter who comes before you, if he does not bring along (*pherei*) “this teaching” (*tauten ten didachen*) about God being incarnate (flesh and blood) in His Son, BEWARE! The refusal to advocate such teaching indicates the arrival of “deceiving propagandists who were carrying discord and danger with them” (Robertson, p. 254). In fact, John says, *me lambanete auton eis oikian kai chairein auto me legete* (“do not receive him into [your] house and do not say greetings to him”) –

The NT exhorts showing “hospitality to strangers” (Heb. 13:2; cp. Mt. 10:11-14;

Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 5:10; 1 Pt. 4:8-10; ) but not those with thief-like motives designed to destroy the very foundation of the Christian faith or message (*te didache*). The church ('ye') should not only not "receive" such a person. They should not even "speak greetings" (*chairein auto me legete*), lest such a person regards those greetings as a positive sign of welcome and willingness to listen to their words. This prohibition, of course, is not directed against an individual Christian showing kindness or hospitality to someone. Rather, the prohibition is directed to the church at large ("ye" – plural) against allowing someone to come before them with the intent to teach or give instructions which run counter to the basic affirmations of the Christian faith.

That portion of the prohibition which singles out or specifies *auton eis oikian* ("into your house") would indicate the church at large which meets within your house. The word *oikia* is used in this sense in Ac. 5:42; 20:20; Ro. 16:5; 1 Co. 1:16:19; Philemon 2. Other than the temple (Ac. 2:46), separate buildings or facilities which were constructed for public worship did not exist at this time.

Again, vs. 11 underscores the significance of this prohibition: *ho legon gar auto chairein koinonei toic ergois autou tois ponerois* ("for the one who speaks a greeting to him shares or participates in his evil works") –

Such a greeting, of course, may signify to the person that they are welcomed to enter and communicate their cause. No wonder, therefore, that such an even potential outcome would be prohibited and classified as "evil works."

The word *koinoneo*, translated "shares or participates," is the verbal form of the noun *koinonia* ("fellowship, a close mutual relationship; participation, sharing in, partnership"). It is found 7 other times in the NT: Ro. 12:13; 15:27; Ga. 6:6; Phil. 4:15; 1 Ti. 5:22; Heb. 2:14, 1 Pt. 4:13. The noun is found 20 times in the NT: Ac. 2:42; Ro. 15:26; 1 Co. 1:9; 10:16 (twice); 2 Co. 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:14; Ga. 2:9; Eph. 3:9; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Philemon 6; Heb. 13:16; 1 Jn. 1:3 (twice), 6, 7.

A scholarly appraisal of these words, and their cognates, is found in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* by Friedrich Hauck (pp. 789-809), as well as *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* by Mouton and Milligan (pp. 350-351).

For an additional perspective on the meaning of these words for both the church, and the individual Christian, it is conceivable that not many, if any, have remotely paralleled, and certainly not excelled or surpassed, the rich writings of Elton Trueblood on this subject of fellowship. This is true from many angles but it is especially true when it comes to fleshing out the practical implications of its meaning and meaningfulness.

Here I mention *Your Other Vocation*, *The Company of the Committed*, *The Incendiary Fellowship*, *A Place to Stand*, and *The Validity of the Christian Mission* (for more details about publications, etc., see **Sources Consulted**).

Faint-hearted, light-hearted, complacently-satisfied church people whose version of the Christian faith borders on religious mediocrity should beware of these writings. On the other hand, they may be the very ones who should be aware

of them and, perhaps, need them the most!  
 Since the Christian faith is not a solo adventure, except with regard to entry, the collectiveness of the Christian message and its manifestations in a local church body, must ever be held tightly. This reality also underscores the significance of why John, in v. 8 says, “watch out for each other or one another.”

#### IV FINAL SENTIMENTS (v. 12-13)

##### A. Proposed Coming (v. 12)

The intensity of this brief letter cannot be exaggerated: love, truth, critical Christian characteristics, obedience, and warnings of shocking prohibitions highlight or underscore the fervor with which John writes. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that he rather abruptly ends his letter. In fact, in a concessive manner, he himself admits that he has many things to communicate to them: *Polla echon humin graphein* (“Although having many things to communicate to you”).

The present tense participle, *echon*, is used with a sense of concession or yielding to an even stronger desire. Whatever the *polla* (“many things”) were which he could communicate to them, he somehow concludes it is best not to do so *dia chartous kai melanos* (“with paper and ink”) – in other words, not in writing. After all, the only that he could “write” was with paper and ink. So, it may be best to translate, *praphein* (“to communicate” rather than “write”) – as I have done. After all, it seems redundant to translate “to write” to you, and then say that he did not want to do so with “paper and ink” – which, again, is the only way he could write.

He then notes his preferred method of communication: *alla elpizo genesthai pros humas kai stoma pros stoma lalesai* (“rather, I hope to come to you and to speak face to face”) – in antithesis to paper and ink which would be “a lowering of style” (Bengel, p. 819).

Indeed, dialogue (person-to-person interactions of reciprocal speaking, listening, clarifying, etc.) is often preferred to one-way written monologues, where misunderstandings and jumping to conclusions about the meaning of words may easily transpire. Clarifications may occur with subsequent contacts, of course. But the time-delay variable may work against effective communications in the immediate time frame.

When John writes, *alla elpizo* (“but I hope”) to come to you, he uses a word which is loaded with affectionate and trust-filled desires for fulfillment. It is not a term of *well, maybe/maybe not – not big deal either way*; or some other kind of superficial way of thinking. Again, it is a term of “joyful and confident expectation; a forward look of certainty.”

When this “hope” materializes, he will then be able to speak “face to face” (*stoma pros stoma*: mouth to mouth or “mouth answering mouth” [Smith, p. 204]). Smith also offers additional words of wisdom in this regard: “It is easy

to lay down general principles, but their application to particular cases is a delicate task, demanding knowledge, sympathy, charity. (1) The sight of people's faces appeals to one's heart and softens one's speech. (2) When one meets with people and talks with them, one's judgment of them and their opinion is often modified" (p. 204).

*The New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips translates, "a heart-to-heart talk together."

The purpose behind this proposed coming, this expectation of face-to-face interactions is now noted: *hina he chara hemon pepleromene e* ("that our joy may be fulfilled"). Again, in the words of J.B. Phillips, "how we shall enjoy that."

The word *chara* ("joy, gladness, happiness") occurs in the NT 60 times and with but four exceptions (Mt. 25:21, 23; Lk. 15:7, 10) refers to what is experienced on this earth by those who know God through Jesus Christ.

Indeed, the word *pepleromene* ("fulfilled, made full; come true, brought about; realized; finished") is a perfect tense, passive voice participle which stresses a state of completion or realization; present, abiding results of "enduring joy" (Lenski, p. 572).

In the words of Gary Burge, "this renewal of fellowship, anchored in a confident relationship in Jesus Christ, is John's image of the Christian life, which he hopes to celebrate with them soon" (p. 236). Indeed, "John shrank from hasty condemnation that there might be no after-regret" (Smith, p. 204).

In our numerous church interactions with friends and foes, we might be well-advised to choose this same manner of responsiveness.

#### B. Pleasantry Communicated (v. 13)

In this closing verse, John resorts, as he did in v. 1, to the use of symbolic, figurative, metaphoric expressions: *Aspazetai se ta tekna tes adelphes sou tes eklektes* ("the children of your elect sister greet you") – This family imagery of the two churches (the one which John represents and the one to whom this letter is written) as children and sisters signifies "love and affection" (Marshall, p. 77). Thus, John concludes as he began with the word *eklektes* (cp. v. 1 for the significance of this term). So, while there must be no welcome and greeting for the false teachers/teachings, the door must ever be opened widely and warmly to those in the family of God – "a most delightful fellowship" (Bengel, p. 819).



## Appendix

Here are excerpts from Alexander Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture* in relation to "grace, mercy, and peace." His insights are superb, to say the least.

"The three main words, 'Grace, mercy, and peace,' stand related to each other in a very interesting manner. . . . Grace, referring solely to the Divine attitude and thought: mercy, the manifestation of grace in act, referring to the workings of that great Godhead in its relation to humanity; and peace, which is the issue in the soul of the fluttering down upon it of the mercy which is the activity of the grace. Such is the order. All begins with grace; and the end and purpose of grace, when it flashes into deed, and becomes mercy, is to fill my soul with quiet repose, and shed across all the turbulent sea of human love a great calm, a beam of sunshine that gilds, and miraculously stills while it gilds, the waves.

The Scriptural idea of grace is love that stoops, and that pardons, and that communicates. The first thing then that strikes me in it is how it exults in that great thought that there is no reason whatsoever for God's love except God's will. The very foundation and notion of the word 'grace' is a free, undeserved, unsolicited, self-prompted, and altogether gratuitous bestowment, a love that is its own reason, as indeed the whole of the Divine acts are, just as we say of Him that He draws His being from Himself, so the whole motive for His action and the whole reason for His heart of tenderness to us lies in Himself. We have no power. We love one another because we apprehend something deserving of love, or fancy that we do. We love one another because there is something in the object on which our love falls; which, either by kindred or by character, or by visible form, draws it out. We are influenced so, and love a thing because the thing or person is perceived by us as being worthy, for some reason or other, of the love. God loves because He cannot help it; God loves because He is God.

God's love is like an artesian well, whensoever you strike, up comes, self-impelled, gushing into light because there is such a central store of it beneath everything, the bright and flashing waters. Grace is love that is not drawn out, but that bursts out, self-originated, undeserved. . . . The grace of God comes spontaneously, driven by its own fullness, and welling up unmasked, unprompted, undeserved, and therefore never to be turned away by our evil, never to be wearied by our indifference, never to be brushed aside by our negligence, never to be provoked by our transgression, the fixed, eternal, unalterable centre of the Divine nature. His love is grace.

Grace is love extended to a person that might reasonably expect, because he deserves, something very different. . . . God's love is love that deals with our transgressions and shortcomings, flows forth perfectly conscious of them, and manifests itself in taking them away, both in their guilt, punishment, and peril. 'The grace of our Father' is a love to which sin-covered consciences may certainly appeal; a love to which all sin-tyrannised souls may turn for emancipation and deliverance. Then, if we turn for a moment from that deep fountain to the stream, we get other blessed thoughts. The love, the grace, breaks into mercy.

As grace is love which forgives, so mercy is love which pities and helps. Mercy regards men, its object, as full of sorrows and miseries, and so robes itself in garb of compassion, and takes wine and oil into its hands to pour into the wound, and lays often a healing hand, very carefully and very gently, upon the creature, lest, like a clumsy surgeon, it should pain instead of heal, and hurt where it desires to console. God's grace softens itself into mercy, and all His dealings with us men must be on the footing that we are not only sinful, but that we are weak and wretched, and so fit subjects for a compassion which is the strangest paradox of a perfect and divine heart. The mercy of God is the outcome of His grace.

Peace comes, the all-sufficient summing up of everything that God can give, and that men can need, from His loving-kindness, and from their needs. . . . There is peace that comes from submission; tranquility of spirit, which is the crown and reward of obedience; repose, which is the very smile upon the face of faith; and all these things are given unto us along with the grace and mercy of God.

To 'abide in the truth' is to keep ourselves conscientiously and habitually under the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and of the Christ who is Himself the Truth. They who, keeping to Him, realizing His presence, believing His Word, founding their thinking about the unseen, about their relations to God, about sin and forgiveness, about righteousness and duty, and about a thousand other things, upon Christ and the revelation that He makes, these are they who shall receive 'Grace, mercy, and peace'" (pp. 48-53).

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